

Spark Gap

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Steve K9DY & Dave KB9LOT work the HF Bean Pot radio. Field Day isn't complete without a gas powered Bean Pot Radio. Photo by W8ISH.

*The Official
Newsletter of the
Mid-State Amateur
Radio Club*



Mid-State Amateur
Radio Club
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MARC Club Busy in June!

MARC club members were kept very busy in June. Steve Carmean, K9DY, Jack Parker, W8ISH, and Chris Fredericks, KG6ZIJ were just a few of our members that worked the

White River Township Strawberry Festival on June 9th. MARC gave tours of the EMCOM van and handed out Amateur Radio information and club information to many who stopped by. Part of the K9DY setup included a 50 watt HF station that used batter power and a portable wire "sloper" antenna attached to a flagpole. K9DY was able to work eight states that day. KG6ZIJ made quite a number of contacts as he was there most of the day working out of the van using the generator. Many others of our group stopped by during the day.

Next up was Field Day on June 23rd. Dave Daily, KB9LOT, secured a shelter house at the Johnson County Park around 9AM. Steve Carmean, K9DY arrived shortly thereafter and the two assembled a temporary "emergency" station consisting of a Ten Tec Scout HF 50 watt transceiver, battery power, and two end fed dipoles, one for 20 meters and one for 40 meters. JR Osborne, KB9HSE, arrived with a ladder, and a pot of beans. The shelter house was large and had high, open rafters, so the group strung the antennas indoors as it was raining at the time. Much use was made of the 146.835 repeater for informal communications. Others attending also brought equipment in case it

was needed. Many of our members stopped by for at least a portion of the day. Bob LaGrange, N9SIU, Jim Smith, WV9W, and Scott Blaydes, KC9LSO are just a few that attended and took part.

One non-ham and one brand new Indy area ham also stopped by. Contacts were made from 2 PM to 8 PM. K9DY manned the radio and KB9LOT did the logging chores. Together they made 62 contact in 27 ARRL sections, 20 states, plus Canada. 34 contacts were on 40 meters and 28 were on 20 meters. Not bad for a small Field Day.

Great Job MARC!

Last up was the Greenwood Freedom Festival on June 30th. W8ISH was in charge of set-up and again, MARC was to be set up next to the EMCOMM van and be in charge of tours. Thanks to K9DY for much of the content for this story and to both he and W8ISH for the great photos.



Photo by K9DY

FCC Releases Post-Katrina Order, "Final Rule"



ARRL: July 12, 2007
On July 11, the FCC released its Order regarding the recommendations of the independent panel reviewing the impact of hurricane Katrina on communications networks (Katrina Panel). It contained their conclusions that followed a review of

the comments filed in response to the FCC's *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)*. The Commission asked for comments a week after the release of the report and recommendations of the Katrina Panel and directed the Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) to implement several of the recommendations. The FCC also adopted rules requiring some communications providers to have emergency/back-up power and to conduct analyses and submit reports on the redundancy and resiliency of their 911 and E911 networks. The FCC's actions go into effect August 10.

The Commission noted that "the amateur radio community played an important role in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and other disasters," and instructed the PSHSB to "include the amateur radio community in its outreach efforts."

The FCC invited comments on the Katrina Panel's recommendation that the FCC "act to enhance the public safety community's awareness of non-traditional emergency alternative technologies that might be of value as back-up communications systems in a crisis." Several commenters suggested that the public safety community be educated about the applicability of Amateur Radio in a crisis. The FCC agreed with these comments, saying that improving the public safety community's knowledge of, and training in, alternative technologies would improve preparedness for future crises. They directed the PSHSB to "develop and implement an awareness program to educate public safety agencies about alternative technologies and to encourage agencies to provide regular training

on any alternative technologies to be used," including educating public safety agencies about alternative technologies.

The recommendations said that several Amateur Radio operators recommended changes to Part 97 of the FCC's rules; Part 97 is the section that covers Amateur Radio. Many of the suggestions, the report said, have already been implemented, and as such, require no further action. For example, "the Commission recently eliminated Morse Code proficiency as a license qualification requirement, an action supported by several commenters in this proceeding."

The FCC once again made clear that Part 97 "does not prohibit Amateur Radio operators who are emergency personnel engaged in disaster relief from using their amateur radio bands while in a paid duty status." This changed this past December in WT Docket 04-140, the "Omnibus" Amateur Radio *Report and Order (R&O)*.

The Commission also previously decided to phase out RACES station licenses, "making proposed changes to rules relevant to these licenses moot." ARRL Regulatory Information Specialist Dan Henderson, N1ND, notes that the FCC "is not phasing out the RACES program, just the RACES station licenses."

Credentialing

The FCC also sought comments regarding the Katrina Panel's recommendation that the FCC work with other federal departments and agencies, as well as the communications industry "to promote and develop national credentialing requirements and process guidelines to enable communications infrastructure providers and their contracted workers to affected areas after a disaster." The National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committees (NSTAC) made the same recommendation to President Bush in 2006.

The Panel recommended that the FCC "work with the communications industry to develop an appropriate basic NIMS training course for communications repair workers that can be

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Officers

President:
Meredith 'JR'
Osborne, KB9HSE

Vice President:
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Spark Gap Editor:
Bob LaGrange,
N9SIU

Katrina Order,

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completed online as a requirement for credentialing.” The Panel also said the FCC should “encourage, but not require, each regional, state and local EOC or JFO to develop credentialing requirements and procedures, consistent with any national credentialing guidelines, for purposes of allowing communications infrastructure providers, their contracted workers and private security teams, if any, access to the affected areas post-disaster.”

Commenters to this proposal generally supported credentialing communications personnel to access affected areas post-disaster. Many stressed that credentialing recommendations should apply to all communications providers; however, commenters were split regarding whether NIMS training should be required as a requirement for credentialing.

The FCC concluded, since the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), rather than the FCC, has jurisdiction and authority to adopt credentialing guidelines that apply to the communications industry, the DHS has “primary responsibility to coordinate federal incident management activities, including disaster site access and credentialing, for all emergency personnel.”

PSHSB staff is already working with DHS to help ensure that any credentialing program would “encompass critical communications infrastructure repair crews and their contracting support staff and to support coordination with regional, state and local officials regarding the development of consistent credentialing programs for communications providers.” The FCC believes the issue of whether to require NIMS training as a requirement for credentialing is best addressed by DHS and regional, state and local authorities as they develop their credentialing programs.” The FCC agrees with DHS that the FCC’s credentialing efforts “should complement, not supersede or duplicate, those of DHS,” and directed PSHSB to continue to work with DHS and the states on these efforts. ■

ARRL:Amateurs Play Key Role in Tennessee Earthquake Exercise

(Jul 2, 2007)

Almost 100 radio amateurs participated in TNCAT '07, the largest and most comprehensive exercise ever conducted by the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA). The exercise, conducted over a 3 day period from June 19-21, was based on a presumed 7.7 magnitude earthquake along the New Madrid Seismic Zone. TEMA’s Operations Chief Hank Koebler, Jr, N3ORX, said he was very impressed with the response from the amateur community. “I anticipated a top-notch performance from them, but they exceeded those expectations by far.”

Throughout the exercise, ARES and MARS continued to provide the bulk of the emergency communications. At the State Emergency Operations Center in Nashville, ARES and MARS operators were set up side-by-side to handle the communications load — ARES handled voice on VHF/UHF and HF links into the disaster area, while MARS handled all Winlink traffic via HF. In the affected counties in West Tennessee, ARES operators performed damage assessments, provided the sole means of communications for the county Emergency Operations Centers and were the communications workhorses for TEMA’s Regional Center in Jackson, Tennessee.

Note: Amateur Radio participation will be needed for any significant earthquake of the New Madrid or Wabash Valley Fault. ■

Fall Technician Classes

Now is the time to start thinking about a Fall Technician Class. If you know of anyone who is interested in attending a 4 week class in order to obtain a Technician's license, please have them contact me at PIO@midstatehams.org.

I will need instructors for 3 of the 4 evenings. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact me at PIO@midstatehams.org. We will use the ARRL education program but will be cutting duplicate slides from the class.

I will also need help in putting together the documentation for the class.

Let me know if there is any interest as classroom space must be secured in the next few weeks. ■

WA9RDF

Repeater

146.835/

146.235 MHz

151.4 Hz PL

Tone

Weekly Net

Every Sunday

at 7PM EST

Tune in to hear

the ARRL

Newsline!

The Mid-State Amateur Radio Club sponsors a weekly traffic and social net on our repeater. The net begins at 7:00 p.m. local time, and features local news, announcements, and NTS traffic, as well as rebroadcasts of Amateur Radio Newsline.

Election of

Officers:

We will be

holding

election of

officers in

September

2007. If you

wish to run

for office,

please

contact one

of the current

officers before

the August

18th meeting.

ARRL: New Emergency Preparedness Law “Legalizes” Amateur Radio in All Texas Public Schools

In what can only be termed a huge victory for the future of Amateur Radio in Texas, Governor Rick Perry recently signed Senate Bill 11 (SB11) into law in June. Among many disaster response specifications, the new law contains two important Amateur Radio-related provisions: State employees who are ham radio operators may take up to 10 days of paid leave while participating in a disaster response or training exercise, and Amateur Radio is now allowed in all Texas public schools.

Amateur Radio has been effectively “locked out” of most Texas schools for years, banned right along with boom boxes and cell phones. When school starts this fall, Texas teachers will be legally allowed to conduct classroom-based ham radio activities and students will be allowed form school-based ham radio clubs. Students who hold a ham license will be allowed to use radios at school even if they are not directly involved in a club.

Ham Radio Gets “Equal Access”

A single sentence in Article 2 of SB11 modifies the legal definition of a banned paging device by adding the following ham radio exception: “The term does not include an Amateur Radio under the control of an operator who holds an Amateur Radio Station License issued by the Federal Communications Commission.”

Although schools can still have basic rules of classroom decorum to insure that ham radio activities do not disturb academic instruction, SB 11 effectively puts ham radio programs on the same legal footing with all other student-initiated clubs and activities. Texas school teachers are now free to start ham radio programs. Students are now free to form school-based ham radio clubs. Individual students who have a ham license are even legally allowed to possess ham radios at school regardless of whether a club exists yet. Texas is the first state to enact such a sweeping change allowing school-based ham radio programs statewide. It is hoped that similar measures will be enacted in other states. Local clubs in Texas are urged to contact their school boards and encourage them to bring school policies regarding student

possession of RF devices into compliance with the new law.

Fixing an Old “Flaw”

A decades-old provision in the Texas Education Code (Section 37.082) long ago granted Texas schools blanket authority to ban student possession of all RF devices, including ham radios. The old law was originally enacted with the best of intentions, but had unintended negative consequences both for student safety and for the cause of Amateur Radio. More than 20 years ago Texas — like many states at the time — passed a law granting schools sweeping authority to ban student possession of “paging devices.” The original intent of the law was to prevent on-campus drug dealers from communicating with one another using now-obsolete numeric pagers. Cut off their communication, the logic went, and drugs on campus would be seriously curtailed.

The old law broadly defined a prohibited “paging device” as any RF device which had the ability to vibrate, emit a sound, display a message, or in any way convey a communication to the possessor. There was no exception for school-based Amateur Radio programs or clubs. Practically all Texas schools immediately exercised their newly-granted right by banning all RF devices to the maximum extent allowed by law — and sometimes to a greater extent than the law allowed.

For example, some schools went so far as to write policies banning mobile units in cars, even though the Texas Attorney General specifically ruled the practice to be unlawful. The old law granted schools the legal authority to ban RF devices far beyond the schoolhouse doors, at off-campus locations during nights and weekends if the student was doing anything broadly defined as “school related.” Merely possessing a cell phone or radio was often considered by school authorities to be the same category of offense as possession of large quantities of drugs or bomb-making materials. With “zero tolerance” policies bring the norm, a handheld in a kid’s backpack could easily get him expelled for the

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Texas Public Schools,

continued

entire school year, and the radio seized by school officials.

The result of the old law was that in most Texas schools, starting a ham radio club was simply out of the question. Existing ham radio programs were even removed from some San Antonio area schools as a direct result of the old law.

The old law — originally intended to reduce drugs on campus — actually decreased student safety by regulating out of the school environment or any school activity the ability of a student to promptly summon help by calling 911 from a cell phone or putting out a MAYDAY call over the radio.

In recent years, some schools have loosened cell phone restrictions to a small degree in the name of student safety. This move has come about in response to such disasters as Columbine and 9/11, and also in response to some high profile child abductions that attracted media attention — not the least of which was the abduction and murder of Amber Hagerman, after whom the “Amber Alert” is named. Parents and school officials are slowly warming up to cell phones since all modern cell phones now come with built-in tracking capability that can allow police to locate a missing child (or at least the child’s cell phone) within seconds. Some 10,000 children are abducted in Texas each year. Individual schools in Texas have largely been very slow to back down from their 100 percent bans on all RF devices. As recently as five years ago, three out of four public school students in the North Texas area were still prohibited from even possessing any kind of RF device at school. The old no-exceptions law certainly proved harmful to the ARRL’s vision of establishing ham clubs and programs throughout the nation’s schools as an investment in the future of Amateur Radio. SB11 takes effect on September 1.

Note: Texas is the first state to pass a law like this. Maybe this is something we need to get behind in order to have a similar law passed in Indiana. If interested, please contact me at PIO@midstatehams.org. Great job Texas!

American Red Cross Training Announced

The American Red Cross, Indianapolis Chapter, will hold the Introduction to Response Technology Team (RTT) training this Saturday, July 21, from 8am until noon at the Chapter House. If you can’t make it this Saturday, we’ll repeat the training in September.

To register, please go to the website: www.indyredcrosstraining.org <<https://www.exchange.iu.edu/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=http://www.indyredcrosstraining.org>>

Click on Disaster Courses, then click on Response Technology for the Chapter, then under Sessions click on 7/21/2007 and fill out the online form. The training is free. For more information contact RussEberhart, N9IV, at reberhar@iupui.edu. ■

Go Bags

Last month I handed out Go Bag lists at the MARC club meeting. One item that did not appear on any of the lists may well be one of the most important items of all. Personal financial and property records.

In this age where most of us are computer savvy, many of us have the equipment and resources at hand to put together a compact record of all our personal financial records and property records including photos of our house and all of its contents. Many of us have digital cameras today and know how to take a photograph and download it to our computer. Even many of today’s cell phones have that capability.

And if you are like me, you may have a scanner/fax/copier/printer combination setting next to your computer. So if you take the time to scan insurance policies, birth certificates, etc. and add photos of possessions to burn to a CD, you have a compact record if you have to evacuate. If you don’t have the equipment to scan documents, an office supply store can provide that service. I haven’t completed mine yet but I’m working on it. How about you? ■

September

Picnic:

*Remember
that the
September
meeting will
be a
combination
meeting and
family picnic.
Election of
officers will
be held after
the meeting.*

Weekly Net

Make sure to check out our weekly net, held every Sunday at 1900 (7 PM) local time.

This is a great chance to meet other local amateur radio operators and test your operating skills.

Newsline is often played, allowing net participants to get the latest news about the amateur radio hobby.

For those without the license or means to check in over the air, we offer an email check-in. Just send an email with your name and contact information to

netcontrol@midstatehams.org and we will record your check-in!



Mid-State Amateur
Radio Club

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Spark Gap

2007 Schedule of Events

Public Service Events and/or Educational/Testing Opportunities

JULY 2007

21 **MARC Meeting - 8 AM**

VEC Testing immediately following the meeting (approx. 9:30 am)

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

21 **Response Technology Team (RTT) training**

Indianapolis American Red Cross Chapter House, 8 am to noon. For more information contact Russ Eberhard, N9IV, at reberhar@iupui.edu

28 **July Sprint Triathlon, Indianapolis**

To volunteer or for more information contact Mike Palmer N9FEB at www.indyhams.com

AUGUST 2007

18 **MARC Meeting - 8 AM**

VEC Testing immediately following the meeting (approx. 9:30 am)

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

18 **August Sprint Triathlon, Indianapolis**

To volunteer or for more information contact Mike Palmer N9FEB at www.indyhams.com

19 **Lafayette Hamfest, Lafayette, IN**

Tippecanoe County Fairgrounds; Talk-in 147.135 PL tone 88.5Hz

SEPTEMBER 2007

15 **MARC Meeting - 8 AM**

VEC Testing immediately following the meeting (approx. 9:30 am)

Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, IN

22 **Greenwood High School Marching Band Invitational**

To volunteer or for more information contact Bob LaGrange, N9SIU

Mid-State Amateur Radio Club

The Mid-State Amateur Radio Club meets the **THIRD SATURDAY** of each month in the basement of the Johnson County Emergency Management Agency, 1111 Hospital Road, Franklin, Indiana 46131.

See our website, www.midstatehams.org, for maps on how to get to our meeting.